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THE
WORK OF
PRAYER

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THE WORK OF PRAYER

By
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HOLY CROSS PRESS

WEST PARK, N. Y.

1921

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ALABAMA

**TO MY MOTHER
WHO FIRST TAUGHT
ME TO PRAY.**

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"And slowly answer'd Arthur from the
barge:

"The old order changeth, yielding place to
new,

And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest our good custom should corrupt the
world.

* * * * *

Pray for my soul. More things are
wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Therefore,
let thy voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or
goats

That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of
prayer

Both for themselves and those who call
them friend?

For is the whole round earth in every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of
God.' "

The Passing of Arthur. Lord Tennyson.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT PRAYER IS

"All through this life, in our prayers as in everything else, we are under a discipline of mystery, working on little by little toward the world of perfect light where the mystery will be opened, and the satisfaction of awaking in the Lord's likeness will be complete."—Frederic D. Huntington.

THE WORLD OF THINGS

We belong—for a while—to two worlds. One of these is the world about us, made up of the things that we can see and hear and touch and taste and smell. I sit here at the table, and look round the room. There are shelves of books, chairs, a case of drawers with a card catalogue. Through the windows I see trees against the blue sky, the grass below, the roof of a building a few rods away. I hear the rustle of leaves, sounds of men chiselling stone and driving nails, down the road

a boy whistling. And, beyond all these sights and sounds, there are, I know, other sights and other sounds—fields in which birds are singing, the dull roar of great cities, broad rivers, the ocean with the everlasting thunder of its restless waves, and, far beyond, the sun, the moon and other planets, distant stars. This is one world. And I belong to it, for my body is one of the things that, together, make it up. My body is one of the objects in this room, along the table, the chairs and the bookshelves.

THE WORLD OF

"a wonderful order" in which they have their place.

"Angels and living saints and dead,
But one communion make."

This spiritual world is what we speak of as "the other world," the "next world." But, in using such expressions, we forget that we are in that "other world" more truly than we are in "this," that the "next" world is really the "nearest" world—

"Nearer to us than breathing,
Closer than hands and feet."

Moreover, the spiritual world does, at certain times and places, invade this material world, as, with every day-break, when the sun invades the darkness of earth. I belong to *this* world, for I am a spirit, *I can* know and feel and love. *I am* spirits that make up *the world*

GOD MADE BOTH WORLDS

God made both these worlds. He made all things about me, or the stuff from which they were fashioned by the hands of men. He made my body. But God Himself is not one of the objects of this world round me, not even the brightest and most beautiful of them. All the objects of this outward world might pass away into the nothingness from which they came. But God would not change. What He was before He made all things, that He still is and will be, though all else should cease to be. "Thou art the Same;" "from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

So, again, God made all spirits, of angels and of men. He made me, a spirit. And not only did He make all spirits, as He made all things, but He made them for union with Himself, to know Him, feel Him, love Him, work along with Him. In God, who is Spirit,

the spirits that He made truly belong to one another. "Hearts can meet only in God."

So the spiritual world has its center and unity in God, far more truly than this earth and the other planets have their center in our sun.

HOW WE LIVE IN EACH WORLD

To go back to where we started. We belong to these two worlds,—the world of bodies or things, the world of spirits or persons. To live in the world of bodies I must go out and take from that world what my body needs. I must open my lungs to be filled with air, my mouth to be fed with food, my ears to hear, my eyes to see, my mind to know the things about me. To live in the world of spirits I must go out and find in that world what my spirit needs. I must come into communication with God that I may know Him, and other spirits in Him. I must try continually to know Him better, that

I may love Him, and others for His sake. I must act out my love to Him by seeking to please Him, to work along with Him, in His plans for me and for His whole creation.

WHY PRAYER IS NECESSARY

In yet fewer words, if I would live the life of the physical world I must breathe. If I would live the life of the spiritual world I must pray. It is not always easy to breathe; there are times when every breath is a struggle, an agony. But if I give up breathing my body will lose its place in this outward world, that is, it will die. It is not always easy to pray; there are times when prayer is a struggle, an agony. But if I give up praying, knowing what prayer means, if I give up all that comes to me through prayer, my spirit will lose its place in the spiritual world, that is it will die, in the sense in which spirits can die.

On the other hand—for still the like-

ness holds to some definite extent—if I learn to breathe better, if by practice I gain in the habit of “deep-breathing,” then my body grows stronger, it has a fuller measure of the life of the material world. So, also, if I learn to pray better, if by practice I come to pray more deeply, with more profound earnestness and trust, then my spirit will grow stronger, it will have a fuller measure of the life of the spiritual world, it will think more clearly, know better, feel more keenly, love more intensely, it will come into closer communion with God, the Father of spirits, and with other spirits in Him.

WHICH OF THE TWO WORLDS IS SUPREMELY IMPORTANT

We belong to two worlds then. Is there any doubt as to which of these two worlds is of supreme importance? The world of things outside of us is “passing away.” Scientific men can almost reckon the time at which this earth will turn into

a ball of discolored ice, and all life will be extinct. And long, long before that, in fact within a comparatively few years, each one of us will have drawn the last breath and our place in this world will know us no more. But the world of spirits is the "eternal world." God does not grow old. Although He is "the Ancient of days" yet His "years shall not fail." "God had no beginning, and will have no end." With Him, as St. Augustine says, "there can be neither 'was,' nor 'will be,' but only 'is.'"

The world of spirits who are in union with God is the eternal world. In Him those spirits "have eternal life,"—they have that life now, not merely hope to have it bye-and-bye. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life." But this eternal life is the life of an immortal spirit, an acting, knowing, loving life. God, who is Spirit, is always acting, knowing, loving. He is Pure Act. To live by His life we, too, must act and

know and love, we must act from Him as our Source, know Him as our Strength, love Him as our Saviour. Our Lord said, "My Father *worketh* hitherto and I *work*," "This is life eternal, to *know* Thee, the only true God"; and St. John says, "We have passed from death unto life because we *love*."

Here, then, is the inevitable necessity of prayer. For prayer is not only the way to know God, it is the act of the spirit knowing God and loving Him. Prayer is communion with God, it is entering into fellowship with Him; in its highest and completest exercise, it is sharing His life.

CHAPTER II.

TO WHOM WE PRAY

"Every gross and cruel superstition has this origin and definition: it springs from ignorance of the name of God; it consists in and by that ignorance . . . Upon our thoughts of God it will depend, in one time or another, whether we rise higher or sink lower as societies and as individuals."

—Frederick Denison Maurice.

PRAYER MUST BE A PROGRESS

He was a dull, doltish sort of boy, and it seemed rather hopeless to try and rouse him to an interest in anything beyond this world, beyond his food and sleep and work. So, when I asked him, "George, do you ever pray?" I was surprised to have him answer, almost with animation, "Yes, I pray." "When do you pray?" I said. "When I have a toothache."

Even such a prayer as this is not to be despised. The crying out for help, under

the sharp thrust of pain; the sense of need, and the reaching into the unseen world to find some answer to that need,—these might be the starting-point of a true and increasing knowledge of God. But that is just the thing that matters. It might serve as a *beginning*. Well and good. But what if it became an *end*? What if the boy never went beyond his appeal for help when he had a toothache? What if he never tried to know the One to whom he made appeal? Then he would soon look elsewhere for relief, look to the world about him, and forget that he ever dreamed of any other world than this. He would find, perhaps, that a few drops of laudanum on a piece of cotton wool were more efficacious than prayer. Or else, as he found that sometimes his toothache stopped, and sometimes it kept on or grew worse, he would have dark and dreadful thoughts about God. He would fancy that God was cruelly teasing him,—as he, himself,

perhaps, teased the cat or the dog,—or that God hated him, and he had a right to hate Him in return.

THE WORD "GOD"

In the last chapter we thought about prayer as the way in which we live and act in the world of spirits, just as breathing is the way in which we live and act in the world of bodies. That is correct if by "prayer" we mean true prayer to the true God. But now we have to face the fact that there may be false gods and wrong prayer. "We must clear our minds (as well as our words) of cant." That is to say, we must ask not only if our words are the faithful expression of our thoughts, but if our thoughts are the faithful reflection of that of which we think. Perhaps, at the present time, there is no question which it is so necessary to put to people as, "What do you mean when you use the word 'God'?" For that word may stand for all sorts of

notions. And, if we are making some terrible mistake as to what we ought to mean when we say "God," we shall make as great a mistake about what we mean when we say "prayer" and so when we actually try to pray.

MISTAKEN IDEAS OF GOD

Some time ago a young man wrote to me, "I believe in God, I believe He is part of myself." It is quite plain, if that is what he did believe, (and I think he was sincere), that, with him, prayer was a monologue, a talking to himself.

It is not uncommon to hear a man say, "I believe in God. I believe He is the Supreme Being." And the very tone of his voice as he makes the statement convinces one that in his thoughts he is putting God as far from himself and his own affairs as possible. To such a man, prayer becomes as futile as trying to attract the attention of the moon in the midnight heavens.

Then, again, there are those who think of God as, "a big man up in the sky," (as the Mormons frankly say, "God was what we are; we shall be what God is.") Such people will make their prayers in a conversational tone, as though they would instruct God, or offer Him valuable suggestions, or even dictate to Him the course He shall pursue.

To others, still, God is little more than a word written over a door that opens into emptiness, and prayer only a means of cultivating certain sentiments in their own souls.

"OUR FATHER"

First of all, then, we must try to have some true knowledge of God, not merely to know *about* Him but to know Him, to know Him as He is, and to know Him in relation to ourselves. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." This is why we are taught,

in the one perfect prayer, to begin by asking, "Our Father . . . hallowed be Thy Name." It might seem as though other needs were more pressing,—bread for our bodies, forgiveness for our souls, protection from our enemies. Yet our first great need is that God should make holy to us His Name and His Nature, should make us know Him as the Father of our spirits, as our perfect, our heavenly Father, "Our Father who art in Heaven."

DIFFICULTY OF KNOWING GOD AS "OUR FATHER"

But, to know God as our Father, we must know ourselves as His children; and that means that we must think and feel and act as His children, must behave as if He were our Father. And this is where the initial difficulty in prayer arises.

For, in the first place, we have never seen God, as we do see this outward world. And, although we may have

felt Him, (at least a few times in our lives) yet the memory of such experience easily grows dim.

Then, secondly, the aspect of the world about us does not encourage us to believe that God is our "Father" in any sense we naturally give to that word. The cruelty of nature to man, and of man to his fellows, the awful waste of life, the daily tragedies, the constant thwarting of the highest and the best in human nature, make it very difficult to think that He who is behind and above it all is anything like what we instinctively feel a father ought to be.

But, thirdly, to own God as our Father is to confess that we are in a state of entire dependence on Him, that we owe him gratitude for our every joy, that He seeks and merits our unhesitating obedience, that he claims, and justly claims, our unstinted love. To own this in our daily life is to make the great surrender; it is to live no longer a life centered in

self, but a life of which the Center is God; it is to make of life not a self-interested enterprise, but a loving and self-forgetting response to a Divine Father who is infinitely wise, patient and loving.

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

There is only one way in which this primary difficulty in prayer can be met. And that is by an act of faith. "If thou canst believe." Yet faith is necessary not only in any true relation between man and God; faith is the only ground for any real friendship between man and man. We can never come to any satisfying knowledge of, or intimacy with, a fellow-being, unless we are ready to make a venture, to trust him, to treat him as though he were worthy of our trust. That alone opens the way for such a discovery of his character as enables us to prove the wisdom of our faith and trust.

In regard to another human being we

may be mistaken. Yet we must take the risk, or go through life friendless and alone. In regard to God we cannot be mistaken. He who is infinite in goodness and love can never prove less than we thought Him to be. Yet we cannot know this for ourselves save by experience. And, therefore, the first necessity for prayer,—that which alone makes true prayer possible—is faith in God. It may be a very dim and hesitating and perplexed faith, but that will be enough, if we will act upon it and thereby put ourselves in the way of receiving more. “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.”

CHAPTER III.

THROUGH WHOM WE PRAY.

"This one thing is the first and last they learned of Him; that the personal friendship of Jesus Christ our Lord was that gift which God was incarnate to bestow on every man who sought it."

—Archbishop Benson.

THE PERFECT SON

"True prayer is the voice of the child to its Father." That is where we have arrived. But, since we must judge of anything by its perfect state, not by any incomplete condition, so to think aright of prayer, we must say that it is "the voice of the perfect Child to the perfect Father." God has always been the Perfect Father, ("Your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.") But where in the whole of this world's experience, shall we find the perfect Child, the perfect Son? Only in One—with bowed heads let us name Him—Jesus Christ. He is

not only "a son;" He is "*the* Son," "the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

God cannot be a sonless Father. And since He is an eternal Father, He has an eternal Son. And, inasmuch as God is infinitely perfect, the Son is all that the Father is, united with Him in the most perfect of all unions,

"Son with the Father ever One,
The Father wholly in the Son."

And that eternal and perfect Son has become perfect Man, has lived His life as Man in this very world of ours, in perfect communion with His Father. The communion of the human heart and mind and will of Jesus with His Father was the one perfect prayer. And it is He, Jesus Christ, who makes this prayer possible to us.

THE PERFECT FATHER

For first of all, it is He alone Who makes God the Father known to us. To

the slow-minded Philip, who asked laboringly, "Lord, show us the Father," Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Over against all the hideous misery and the more terrible wickedness of the world, stands the Cross of Christ, revealing the infinite tenderness of the Father's love for His disobedient children, for "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." All the pity and the patience, the power and the glory, that our hearts can long to find in our Father's heart, we find shown forth to us in Jesus Christ. To His disciples our Lord said, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son . . . that the world, through Him, might be saved," and "The Father Himself loveth you," "The Father that dwelleth in Me doeth the works," "I am in the Father and the Father in Me."

And not only does the Father come to us, revealing His love in Jesus Christ, His Son, but through and in Jesus Christ, we

can come to the Father. "No man cometh to the Father but by Me." He shows us what is true human *love* to the Father and so what true human *prayer* to the Father, is. How much we know, or might know, about the prayer-life of Jesus! "The life of Christ was throughout a life of prayer. Not only did He love to spend many hours in lonely communing with His Father . . . but His whole life was spent in habitual realization of God's presence. The word 'Abba' seems to have been constantly on His lips, so that it became one of the watch-words of the Christian community, the sound of which those who had been with Jesus never forgot."

PERFECT PRAYER

Jesus shows us what true prayer is, what it meant to Him, the Perfect Son, to speak to His Father, how He, while here on earth, was also continually in the spiritual world. ("The Son of Man

which is in Heaven.") And then, as we watch Him, the desire springs up in our hearts, to do what He is doing. So it was with the first disciples. "And it came to pass, that as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray." And then He gave them, and gives us, the *Pater Noster*, the "Our Father," the pattern and summing up of all prayer.

THE PATER NOSTER

The first word in that prayer is "Father" (so in the Greek, Latin, German, and other languages, though not in English) Our Lord utters the word that we may say it after Him, and try to give to it for ourselves something of what it meant to Him. So we exercise the privilege of our sonship, being sons of God.

The second word is "our." That word, if we live up to its significance,

rescues our prayer from all selfishness. For the "our," "of us," takes in every soul in the world, in some sense it takes in all creation. So we do not pray alone. We are in fellowship with all God's creatures. So we recognize every man and woman as a brother or a sister, and ask for each and all the very same that we ask for ourselves.

The next four words, "Who art in Heaven," take us out of the prison-house of outward things, and make us free for the "other world," the world of spiritual life. "In entering the world of prayer we enter the world of reality." It is from that vantage-ground that we can rightly ask for the supply of all our needs, of body, mind or soul.

THE SEVEN PETITIONS

Then follow the seven great petitions. The word common to the first three is "Thy." "Thy Name," "Thy Kingdom," "Thy Will," taking us back to the first

word of the prayer—"Father." The word common to the last four petitions is "us," "Give us," "Forgive us," "Lead us not," "Deliver us," taking us back to the second word of the whole prayer, "our" or "of us."

It will help very much if, occasionally, we say the "Our Father," clause by clause, as though hearing the voice of Jesus saying the words, trying to grasp more and more of all the meaning that He gives to the words, confident that, though the words have been spoken so many million times, and by the greatest Saints of the Church, yet their whole meaning has never yet been compassed in this world.

PRAYER IN JESUS

But this is not all. It is not enough that our Lord should show us in His own life what true prayer is. Nor is it enough that He should teach us in His own patient and loving fashion how we

are to pray, saying for us the very words which we may use, that we may experience "the sense of dependence upon God and the way to have speech with Him." All that, though in far inferior degree, any wise and holy man might do on our behalf. But there is that which we need and which only He who is the God-Man can do for us. We belong to a race which has revolted from God, and we have forfeited our place as children of the Father. We need to be recovered to our true sonship, to be restored to our home. And this is what Jesus does for us, what no other but He could do. He takes us up into Himself, so that in our baptism we are born again, and are identified with Him. He took our nature that we might be partakers with Him of the Divine Nature. As St. Augustine says, "The Son of God became the Son of Man, that the sons of men might become sons of God." In Him, our whole nature is redeemed and renewed, and His Man-

hood becomes a transforming principle in us. We are members of the Body of Christ, and we act in Him, our Head. Because He is the perfect Son, and we are in Him, therefore we have received the adoption of sons and are in true filial relation to the Father. It is not only that we say "Our Father" after Him, we say it *in* Him; nay, He says it in us. The voice of the Well-beloved sounds in every true Christian prayer, and we are accepted in Him. And, being thus taken up into Him, we can plead all that He is and all that He has done. We lift up the Cross before the face of our Father and ask to be heard because of the Sacrifice offered there, because of the unmerited but willing endurance by our Lord of all suffering and of death itself, because of the victory of the Crucified over all the foes that would hold us back from God.

“Look, father, look on His anointed
Face

And only look on us as found in
Him;

Look not on our misusings of Thy
grace,

Our prayer so languid, and our
faith so dim:

For lo! between our sins and their
reward

We set the Passion of Thy Son,
our Lord.”

CHAPTER IV.

BY WHOM WE PRAY

"We do not pray to change the divine scheme; but to ask those things which God has decreed to be brought about by prayer."—St. Thomas Aquinas.

AN EVENING SCENE

A picture used to hang in my mother's chamber during the latter years of her life. It had little artistic merit, but the sentiment which produced it seemed genuine and sincere. The picture portrayed a simple bedroom, in an old-fashioned farm-house, with bare floor and sloping ceiling. Through a dormer window shone the warm glow of a summer sunset. Within, the darkness was already gathering in the corners of the room, but the wide bedstead was still in light. Curled on the bed was a black kitten asleep, or purring softly. And, kneeling at the foot of the bed, her arms

folded on the worn quilt, her face hidden on her arms, was a little girl, in long white shift, saying her night prayers.

Such a scene brings different suggestions to different minds. Among them is the sense of contrast,—the contrast between the “two worlds” described in the first chapter of this brochure. One of these is the world of outward things, things that can be seen and heard and handled. The other is the spiritual world of personal thought and will and action.

THE “TWO WORLDS” AGAIN

As an event in this material world, in the unfolding of the earth’s physical history, the little child at her prayers, alone in the quiet room, is of utter insignificance, scarcely more important than the chirp of the August cricket in the wet grass outside, or the twinkle of the evening star, shining clearer as the sunset fades.

But, if we open our minds to the

spiritual world, what tremendous personal forces meet in the utterance of that little heart. For, to render possible that child's prayer, the infinite and eternal God,—Father, Son and Holy Ghost,—must be acting in the fulness of His love and power, at this very point of time and space, at this evening hour, in this darkening room.

WHAT TRUE PRAYER INVOLVES

That Christian child could not say one word of true and acceptable prayer, unless: God the Father had willed that she should speak to Him; unless God the Son had become Man and died and risen again and were pleading His Passion in mighty intercession so that she might come to the Father in Him; and unless God the Holy Ghost were giving her the words to speak and were taking His place in her heart to say the words with her. "And when that cry goes up before the Throne, it will be

heard and remembered because the Holy Ghost prepared and sent it,—the Son perfected it,—the Father received it. Therefore, every child's lisping of prayer enfold all the mysteries of the Eternal Trinity."

This is only what Saint Paul tells all Christians, old or young, that God has "sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying 'Abba', 'Father'," and that they all, through Jesus Christ who "reconciled them unto God by His Cross," have "access by one Spirit unto the Father," and that no one can say "Lord Jesus" but "by the Holy Ghost."

It is of this that we now want to think. The prayers that I say, if they are true Christian prayers, do not begin with myself. I do not originate them, although they express my deepest longings, my truest self. These prayers come to me from God the Holy Ghost. He breathes into me, by the *inspiration* of His love, the "holy desires," which

then, by His help, I breathe out, in *aspiration* to God. And, by that same Spirit, these desires are carried up to the Father's loving heart and accepted through the mediation of His well-beloved Son.

TRUE PRAYER NOT ORIGINAL TO ONESELF

Thus is met the second difficulty in the life of prayer. We saw that true prayer requires a true knowledge of God, such as results from *faith* in Him as He made Himself known to us. But, then, further the question comes,—“Are the praises that I try to offer to God, or the petitions I present, really such as God can accept? Are they not too cold and weak to win His attention and approval?” And there is only one way in which this second difficulty in the life of prayer can be met. That is by an act of *hope*. Not hope in ourselves, but hope in the purpose and power of the Holy Ghost to “pray the

prayer within us that to Heaven shall rise," to "sing the song that angels sing above the skies."

FAMILIAR DIFFICULTIES IN PRAYER

Let us go into this matter somewhat more fully. No complaints are more familiar to those who try to help souls than,—“I can’t pray.” “I can’t keep my thoughts from wandering.” “I can’t make myself feel earnest or devout.” “It makes me cross to say my prayers. I am sure it is no use to pray when I feel like that. It is only mocking God.”

Now these complaints come almost always from a mistake about prayer of which we must be rid if we would pray aright. The mistake is this,—that if I keep my mind steadily fixed on what I am praying about, and if my heart is stirred with devotional feelings, then my prayer will be pleasing to God. But that, on the other hand, if my mind is distracted and confused, and my emotions are dull

or dead, then my prayer will fall back, unable to rise to God, like a bird with a broken wing. In other words that, although I must make my prayer "through Jesus Christ our Lord," yet the starting-point of the prayer is in myself, and its effectiveness is dependent upon the force and intensity that I give to it.

This view of prayer sounds reasonable and is not so easily detected, since a half-truth is often more dangerous than open error. But, plausible as it may be, its effect is strangely disheartening. For it implies that prayer is necessary if we are to take and keep our place in the spiritual world, yet that we must, by some effort of our own, take and keep our place in the spiritual world in order to pray: that to know and love God we must pray to Him, yet that God will receive our prayer according to our natural ability to know and love Him: that prayer is the way to become saints,

yet that we must be saints in order to pray, or, at least, to pray with confidence in the result.

PRAYER IS GOD'S GIFT

Where is the flaw in this apparent deadlock? It is in forgetting that prayer itself, as well as the answer to prayer, is a *gift*, bestowed upon us not because we *deserve* it, but because we *need* it. And the worthfulness of prayer comes not from what we think, or from what we feel, but from what the Holy Ghost does. By my prayer I do not move God to come to me but God moves me to come to Him.

The whole matter can be stated in a few words. There are certain things which God wants to give to me, or wants to enable me to do towards Him. So, at the proper time He sends His Holy Spirit to stir in me the desire for that which He has made ready for me to have or to do. If I welcome this desire then

the Holy Ghost within my soul uses its powers,—mind, affection, will,—to turn the desire into words and to make of the words a prayer to God. The prayer-value depends not upon the human spirit but upon the Divine Spirit. "The prayer, therefore, is part of the gift. It is the channel which God Himself opens in a man's heart through which He may pour the blessing He purposes to bestow."

PRAYER IS OUR WORK

Does this mean that I am dispensed from making any effort, that I can take my ease because Another speaks through me? No, indeed. While prayer is on God's part a gift, it must on my part, with His help, be a labor and a struggle,—a labor in which all my faculties are employed, a struggle against my spiritual foes who would stifle the "voice of my cry." I must do my best to resist distractions, to mean the words I say, to desire what God puts into my heart to

ask from Him. It is only as I do my best that I show that I really want the Holy Spirit to pray within me, that I open my heart to receive His gift of prayer.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But not as though the righteousness were the man's own personal possession. The "righteous man" is one who is learning more and more his own weakness, and is turning more and more from himself to God, so that God is more and more free to carry out His will in him. Yet this very surrender is the man's own development in righteousness, in the way of effective prayer. Man is never more truly himself than when he is working along with God, and he is never more free than when the Holy Ghost is inspiring him so to work. Yet, in this coöperation with God, the one essential thing is that man shall be conscious that he is wholly dependent upon Him. And, with a creature so self-assertive as man, it is

often the very dullness and distraction of his mind, the very lumpishness and reluctance of his will, the very coldness and deadness of his feelings, which fling him back upon the Holy Spirit to do for him and in him and through him what he can not do for himself.

A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

So the very best and loudest prayer in the ear of God may come from a soul that feels itself bereft of His light and love, and yet, for that very reason, longs all the more yearningly to be able to speak to Him. Let such a soul abandon itself to its mighty Comrade and Friend, the Holy Spirit. If it find no other words, let it say, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." "Lord, take my soul for I cannot make it Thine, and keep it for I can not keep it Thine." Or, if its case seems still more desperate, let it cry, with Jesus on His cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

CHAPTER V.

WHEN WE SHOULD PRAY

"Prayer is possible at any time and at all occupations, but the man who prays when he is cleaning his boots is always likely to be the man who has set apart time to keep up the habit."

—Fr. Figgis.

PRAYING BY RULE

Is it well to have a rule as to our prayers, to establish a habit as to what we shall say to God and when we shall say it?

It is not uncommon to meet with a definite objection to any set times or forms for devotion. "Is it not very mechanical," it is asked, "to say prayers according to a fixed rule? Ought not prayer to be spontaneous and free? Do not prayers said perforce become unreal or superstitious?" It would be foolish to ignore the dangers that meet us in

taking up a rule as to our prayers. It is true that we may come to say them thoughtlessly. We may ease our conscience by *merely* saying them. "By rule" may come to be "by rote."

But, then, on the other hand, if we have no order or method about our devotions, and pray only when we feel like it, there is at least an equal danger that we shall grow less and less disposed to prayer, and that infrequency will end in neglect. What we may do at any time is often what we actually do at no time.

How shall we solve this dilemma? We must find out what kind of prayer is most to the honor of God, and most needful for ourselves; what is most pleasing to Him, and most profitable,—not most pleasant,—for us.

A RULE OF PRAYER HONORS GOD

In the last chapter we saw that what counts with God is the movement of our wills towards Him, the purpose which

lies behind our acts,—what we *mean*, not what we *feel*. We could not pray at all unless we had the will to pray. It is just the offering of our wills which opens the way for the Holy Spirit to plead within us. Now to adopt a definite rule for prayer is to determine that we will speak to God, not only *now* and *here*, but that we will go on speaking to Him, regularly, no matter what our mood may be—even when we are reluctant to make the effort. A Rule for Prayer gives a pledge that we mean to persevere in prayer, and to be “faithful unto death.” It is easy to see that, in binding ourselves by such a rule, we are making a far more comprehensive act of will, than when we pray by some sudden impulse, which, however strong at the moment, passes away, and leaves no abiding purpose whereby we give to God not only the present but the future. The more we surrender our whole selves, what we are and what we are to be, in

response to the eternal love of God, the better is the prayer we make to Him.

A RULE OF PRAYER HELPS US

And, then, most of us need just the kind of stimulus which a Rule of Prayer supplies. Difficulties and hindrances in prayer must be faced. At times we shall be dull and dry, and prayer will bring no refreshment or relief. Such trials may be the result of past unfaithfulness on our part, or, again, they may rise from no fault of our own. "My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation." Prayer is not only communion with God. It is also a struggle with our spiritual foes. Both flesh and spirit flag in that encounter. No doubt

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

But that does not prevent him from doing his utmost to defeat the effort of the

humble saint, to drug his senses, distract his mind, perplex his soul, discourage his spirit. In such conflicts a well-ordered rule is of priceless worth, provided we look, not to ourselves but to God for strength to keep it, provided we see in the rule the will of God for us and fling ourselves upon His sustaining power. By means of the rule God tides us over the seasons of depression and assault.

“For this the vow was spoken
That the low days might be true.”

Nor does a Rule for Prayer render us less prompt to speak to God when the impulse stirs within us. Regularity in prayer develops the prayer-attitude of dependence and trust, so that we can, at last, as the Apostle bids us, “Pray without ceasing.” “Times and places and postures in prayer are to be used, not until we come to be independent of them but until we come to universalize them, making all life one sacrament.”

HOW TO FRAME A RULE OF PRAYER

Let us essay the drawing up of a Rule for Prayer. It would, of course, form a large part of any "Rule of Life," for such a Rule is an ordering of our daily actions and interests in reference to God as their true End, and among all the things that we do or say prayer should have the central and fundamental place. If our prayer is right, then all else will tend to be right. St. Theresa says that no one can pray a quarter of an hour a day and be lost—she means earnest and sincere prayers the heart of which is "Thy will be done."

EACH DAY A LIFE IN LITTLE

In drawing up a Rule for Prayer we naturally begin with the management of our daily devotions. The aim to order the prayers we offer each day is that in them we may do the most for God, for others and for ourselves. This is in

accordance with a right estimate of what each day should mean to us.

A Latin proverb bids us, "Treat each day as a life." For every day is a sort of miniature of our whole earthly existence. We come out of the unconsciousness of sleep in the morning, as though we were beginning life afresh. We pass into the unconsciousness of sleep at night, as though life in this world were over. Now there are two times when we are told it would be a sin not to pray. One of these is when, as little children, we first come to a knowledge of God and realize that to Him, as our Father, we owe our very being. The other time is when we come to die, and know that, in a little while, we are to meet Him, as our Judge, in the particular judgment. There is, therefore, very strong reason for beginning and ending each day with prayer, for making prayer "the key of the morning and the bolt of the night."

OUR MORNING RECOLLECTION

How shall we direct our morning prayers? The presence of God should be our first thought on waking, as though His look and voice and touch had roused us. It should become as natural to us on waking to whisper "God" or "Jesus" as it is for the little child, disturbed in sleep, to murmur "Mother." This instinctive looking up to God with implicit adoration of His Majesty and love for His goodness is what is called *Recollection*. It is the most universal form of prayer, the prayer which we can practise at all times and places, the prayer of which St. Paul was thinking when he wrote to his disciples in Macedonia, "Pray without ceasing." *Recollection* has many different degrees of intensity, but in some degree it is always possible.

RECOLLECTION OF OTHERS

We can recollect the presence of other persons when we are engaged in the most

engrossing occupation. This is a singular psychologic fact, but it is one with which we are perfectly familiar. There is hardly any intellectual effort more absorbing than to speak extemporaneously before a great audience on some momentous occasion. Yet in the midst of the most impassioned appeal the speaker is keenly conscious of those whom he is addressing, of various individuals in the audience, of their attitude towards him and towards what he is saying, of the reaction he is producing in their minds. All this does not hinder his utterance, on the contrary it stirs his mental powers to the very utmost effort of which they are capable.

RECOLLECTION OF GOD

If that is true of our recollection of other human beings like ourselves, it must be not less but more possible of recollection of the Presence of God. Just as we may work with utmost dili-

gence, hour after hour, in a room where another person is present, tinglingly alive at every instant to that other personality, so we may be ever conscious of God, doing all as "in our great Taskmaster's eye," offering up all we do as done for Him. "Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

RECOLLECTION CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS

Yet not only may *Recollection* be an act of which we are fully conscious. It may go on in the sub-consciousness, as in the hours of rest at night. "I sleep, but my heart waketh," as the beloved says in the Canticles. When we remember that God is more intimately present to our souls than life is to our outward senses we shall see that the moment of waking is not the passing of the spirit from a realm where God is not to a world in which He is, but rather from a condition in which we know God instinctively

and immediately to one in which we must seek Him behind the veil of outward things. This may be the explanation of an experience which some at least who read this have known, when, on waking, we seem to be aware of a Presence that has but just removed itself from us, as though, had we but wakened a moment sooner, we should have seen Him standing beside us.

OUR FIRST WAKING MOMENT

At any rate, it is our privilege, by making the thought of God fill the last moment of consciousness as we fall asleep, to find the moment of waking one of loving *recollection* of Him, a recollection that we must try to renew all day long, as the clock strikes, or the bell rings, or as we catch sight of some object like the crucifix which recalls the thought of God, until there are fewer and fewer moments that are not blessed by a recognition of His never ceasing care and love.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR MORNING PRAYERS

"I know not which is the greater wonder, either that prayer, which is a duty so easy and facile, so ready and adapted to the powers and skill and opportunities of every man, should have so great effects, and be productive of such mighty blessings; or, that we should be so unwilling to use so easy an instrument of procuring so much good."

—Jeremy Taylor.

"Charlie, what is the reason that you say your prayers at night, but not in the morning?" "Why, at night I want God to take care of me, but in the day-time I can take care of myself." Most of the excuses that people give, for not beginning the day with prayer, are about as sensible as this.

A RIGHT BEGINNING OF THE DAY

If there is any truth in the old adage "Well begun is half done," it must apply in a unique way to the conduct of each

day of our life, that particular section of our work in this world which is bounded by our waking in the morning and our falling asleep at night. And can any day be said to be "well begun" if we have entered upon it without reference to God, without taking Him into account?

If, as was urged in the last chapter, we form the habit of filling the first moment of waking with an adoring thought of God, then we shall want at once to act towards Him. The "recollection" of which we have been thinking is not merely an intellectual reminiscence, as when we recall some object or persons in the outward world. It must mean a movement not only of the mind but of the heart and will. The mother who wakes at night and recalls her little child does not only *think* of it, she *loves* it, and *acts* as she reaches her hand out to make sure that it is safe beside her, to draw the coverlet more snugly about the sleeping form.

THE THREE MORNING PRAYERS

With what acts, then, should we accompany our waking recollection of God? There are three acts that seem essential to a true response to Him who has been watching over us while we slumbered, who raises us up for another day of service to Him, without whom we can accomplish nothing really good in the hours that lie before us. These acts may be named, Adoration, Dedication, Supplication. About each of them there is much to be said.

ADORATION

First, we should praise God. This is the primal debt which every creature owes to the Creator. So the Angels, as they sprang into being, broke into a torrent of praise to God. The Holy Angels carry on that praise ceaselessly forever. We are to join them every morning. Creation began with a burst

of praise, so should each day of our created life.

Praise to God on the part of an intelligent creature is an acknowledgment of His infinite Perfections, with a heartfelt admiration and *adoration* of their unspeakable worthfulness.

“My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thy majesty how bright,
How beautiful Thy mercy-seat,
In depths of burning light.
How wonderful, how beautiful.
The sight of Thee must be;
Thine endless wisdom, boundless
power,
And awful purity.”

Of all the many forms of prayer there is none that calls for more care and faithfulness than this adoration or praise. It is in worship and adoration that we are definitely practising for the endless Alleluia of the heavenly courts. Other modes of address to Almighty God will

pass away, but the citizens on high will praise God for ever and ever. And then it is in adoration and praise that we escape from the last entanglements of self-centeredness and self-love. Vocal prayer rises to its loftiest climax in the words of our Eucharistic worship, "we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory." There self is forgotten. There we escape from self "in adoration, self-surrender, and blessing in the awe and joy of welcoming the Presence of the Eternal Beauty, the Eternal Sanctity, and the Eternal Love, the Sacrifice and Reconciliation of the world."

DEDICATION

The second act which we should make at the beginning of the day is that of offering ourselves afresh to God, to be His alone, to be used by Him as he sees best, in the carrying out of His holy and blessed will. All that we are is His gift, to be restored to Him. He created us

for Himself, that we may find our joy in Him. We are to be prepared, at His call, to meet the joys and sorrows, pains or pleasures which the day may bring.

A saintly spirit has expressed this dedication of self in words that we may aspire to make our own.

"O Adonai, O Ruler of Israel, Thou that guidest Joseph like a flock, O Emmanuel, O Sapientia, I give myself to Thee. I trust Thee wholly, Thou art wiser than I—more loving to me than I myself. Begin to fulfil Thy high purposes in me whatsoever they be—work in and through me. I am born to serve Thee, to be Thine, to be Thy instrument. Let me be Thy blind instrument. I ask not to see—I ask not to know—I ask simply to be used."

Such an act of dedication sets a keynote for the whole day, for all that we may undertake, for the tasks that we have done a thousand times before and for the adventure upon new and untried

paths. We are to renew this offering of ourselves more and more often, until we become "conscious acts of dedication, giving ourselves to God with every breath we draw," following "the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." The Church calls upon us then to offer ourselves at every Eucharist,—“here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto Thee,” and every Eucharist should set before us the ideal of our every action. We are “to worship God in every thing we do,” and our worship must be a sacrifice of self, in union with the “tremendous Sacrifice” pleaded every morning on the altar of the Church.

SUPPLICATION

It is not necessary to say to those who have read this chapter thus far that prayer does not mean only “asking God to give us things.” That is the notion

of it in the minds of worldly and unspiritual people. They think of it as a sort of device whereby we may hope to obtain from God what we want even if He is not much disposed that we should have it. It is strange and sad enough that persons who have had a Christian upbringing should so think of prayer. For this, as was shown in the fourth chapter, quite reverses the whole process of prayer, putting ourselves first not God, and seeking not to bring our will to Him but to bend His will to ours.

What we must try to realize is that the background of all supplication, of all asking from God, is the prayer of adoration and of dedication. We must see in God the Infinite Love, which desires our true happiness a million times more than we can wish for it, and we must be sure that nothing could possibly be better for us than that the primary will of God for us should be carried out, that the heart of every petition we make to God is "not

my will, but Thine, be done." The condition of any true supplication to God is clearly given by St. John: "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, *because* we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight," "and this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything *according* to His will, He heareth us." People sometimes ask querulously, "If it is God's will that I should have all that I need, all that is good for me, why must I ask Him for it?" The answer is very simple: "Because these are things which God wills that I shall have, if I have them at all, in answer to my prayers. God made me for Himself. He gives me many things without my asking for them. I did not ask that the sun should rise this morning, or that the mail should arrive. But there are things that I must ask for. God made me for Himself; the whole universe without Him would be nothing to me. I cannot have God save as I

know Him and love Him. If God were to give me everything I need without my asking Him for aught I might easily forget Him. Of the wicked it is said 'He gave them their desire and sent leanness withal into their soul.' Moreover, since God has made me in His own image, and calls me to be like Him, I cannot have what I need most unless by my own will I choose Him, and cry to Him for light whereby to know Him, and love whereby to be united to Him. If I do not pray the doom will be mine 'Ye have not because ye ask not.' Therefore I fall to prayer for what I need, and above all for grace to make all the experiences of this day an occasion for knowing God better and for loving Him more."

So, thirdly, we should own our weakness, and ask God to guard and guide, to support and strengthen us. So only can we, with true Christian courage, go forth day by day into this terrible world.

A PRAYER ON RISING

It has taken me some time to consider the three acts of Adoration, Dedication and Supplication. But those acts can be made in the saying of a very brief form of words. Such a form I am giving now, and I would suggest that it be said, if possible, on one's knees, immediately upon rising, while one signs oneself with the sign of the cross.

"I praise my God this day;
I give myself to God this day;
I ask God to help me this day."

The origin of this prayer may be of interest. Thirty-odd years ago, when I was working in the New York tenements, I was speaking to one of my boys about his morning prayers. He was a little fellow, much under weight for his age, but he was already at work in one of the big factories. He told me quite frankly that he was so tired every morn-

ing that his mother had to pull him out of bed and how, after gulping a cup of hot coffee, he had to run to the factory. He didn't see when he could get in his morning prayer. I asked him up how many flights he lived—most of our people seemed to live on the top floor. He said that he was up three flights. "Then," I said, "I will give you a prayer to say on each flight, and they will all be said before you get out on the street." I found that he used the prayers I gave him. Since then I have taught these prayers to some thousands of children.

OTHER MORNING DEVOTIONS

Few of those who read this are so hard pressed for time as the little boy of whom I have just made mention. They ought certainly to spend some time in prayer before leaving their rooms. I say "spend some time in prayer" for I am sure that many persons would find that they could pray with much less distraction if they

put a watch before them and determined to give a full five or ten minutes to real intercourse with God, instead of aiming to repeat a certain number of prayers, or laying themselves open to this temptation to hurry through them and so "save time." "Hurry is the ruin of devotion." But while one can hurry the saying of a form of words, one cannot hasten the passage of time.

Suppose that one has said the prayer just given immediately on rising. Then during one's ablutions one might well repeat the vows of one's Baptism and perhaps say from memory Psalm sixty-three. While dressing one could make the "examination of fore-thought," looking forward to the day, and preparing oneself to meet some special temptation to ill-temper, discouragement, tardiness. Then, when ready to leave one's room, one could read five verses in the Bible—from the Gospels or the Psalms—and then kneel and say the Acts of Religion.

ACT OF FAITH

My God, I believe in Thee, and all Thy Church doth teach, because Thou hast said it, and Thy word is true.

ACT OF HOPE

My God, I hope in Thee for grace and for glory, because of Thy mercy, Thy promises and Thy power.

ACT OF LOVE

My God, I love Thee, and for Thy sake, I desire to love my neighbor as myself.

Then one could say the *Kyrie*, the *Our Father*, the Collect for the week, some prayer or prayers in one's own words (every one should make up his or her own book of private devotions, writing out some prayers from time to time) and close by standing and saying the Creed as a battle-cry before going out to the day's conflict.

All this could be done, without haste

and with real attention, in less than five minutes. The *Our Father* by itself takes less than half a minute, said with full attention, and yet people assert that they have not time to say these morning prayers.

CHAPTER VII.

MENTAL PRAYER

"Prayer is ever its own sufficing recompense. Its words react on your soul like a benediction. It puts the world at your feet. It makes all things yours while you are Christ's and Christ is God's. The spirit comes back from its seasons of converse with God into the strife of the world, its interior face radiant with a veil of glory like that Moses wore when he came down from the Mount."

—Frederic D. Huntington.

Any description of prayer, and of a Rule of Prayer, would be very incomplete if it did not include the practice of meditation or "mental prayer." The difficulty at this point is not that so little has been said and written about meditation but that so much has been said and written about it that people have taken fright and imagined that it must be a very elaborate and difficult affair, requiring vigorous intellectual

effort such as is hardly possible save for trained minds. As a matter of fact, while there are forms of meditation which are suited for saints and philosophers, there are also forms which are among the simplest devotional exercises, and which require less mental effort than adding up a column of figures.

MEDITATION NOT A STRAINING OF THE MIND

Indeed, many people stumble at meditation not because they do not try hard enough but because they try too hard, that is to say with too much straining of mind and nerves, too much activity of the human spirit. Meditation is a very quiet attitude of the heart waiting quite simply and patiently for God to say to it what He will. As the old peasant pointing at the crucifix above the tabernacle said to the Curé d' Ars, "I look at Him and He looks at me." The motto for meditation is, "My soul

waiteth in stillness upon God," or, "I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me." "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

AN ILLUSTRATION FROM DAILY LIFE

Let me take an illustration from our experience of human relations. Here is a youth starting out in life, going to college, or leaving home to take a position. He has just received a letter from an older friend, a former teacher perhaps, or a priest who has known him from childhood up. The youth is conscious of the interest his friend takes in him, he is convinced of his friend's good judgment and of his high standards of life and conduct. He feels that his friend understands him better than he does himself and that a much longer and larger experience of life enables his friend to appreciate what lies before him much better than he can. So the youth is not content to read his friend's letter hurriedly

through and then throw it aside. On the contrary, he keeps it by him, and, as occasion offers, in some pause of his work, or when walking to and fro on his accustomed beat, he takes the letter out and cons it, turning the sentences over and over in his mind, and trying to gather from them all that his friend sought to convey to him through them.

That is meditation, when the Friend is God, and the letter is the record of His revelation of Himself, brought to its fulness in the Life and Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

DIRECTIONS FOR MEDITATION

A meditation could be made at any time of the day, except that it had better not be made just before retiring for the night. No particular place or posture is necessary, but it is well to fix upon a certain definite length of time—ten minutes at first—and to choose a time and place when one will not be overcome

by sleepiness. As suggested above, a meditation could be made when walking from place to place out of doors.

I remember as a boy that, when she came in from doing her marketing, or about that time if she did not go out, my mother used to sit down in her room for half an hour, with her devotional books, and during this time it was not the thing for us children to interrupt her.

It seems hardly necessary to say that the meditation should be begun and ended with direct prayer to God and that the meditation should tend to become more and more a colloquy with Him, as the disciples often talked with Jesus when He was visibly among them, and the two disciples on the way to Emmaus on the first Easter afternoon questioned the stranger and believed as He opened to them the Scriptures though it was not until the Breaking of Bread that they knew it was He. As prayer should result in some practical doing of God's will, so

at the end of the meditation, it is well to form some resolutions to be carried out later in the day, something very simple and explicit.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOON AND NIGHT PRAYERS

*"Forenoon and afternoon and night,
Forenoon and afternoon and night,
Forenoon and—what? No more?
Yea, that is life. But make that forenoon,
That afternoon a psalm, that night a prayer,
And time is conquered and thy crown is won."*

PRAYER AT NOON

A certain number of people will find the noon hour a suitable time for making a meditation. Whether they do so or not it is certainly well to mark the passing of the sun over the meridian by some definite prayer or ejaculation. During the Great War I was in Poughkeepsie once about the middle of an ordinary week-day. As the city clocks struck twelve, I suddenly saw the policeman who directs the traffic at Main and Market Streets standing at attention.

Glancing about I saw others here and there halting their steps and standing silent. On enquiring, I was told that an order had been given out that half a minute should be given at noon daily for the men at the front.

I do not know how far this custom was followed in other places, but it is certain that every noon thousands of prayers go up to God and that ours should have a place among them.

THE ANGELUS

The devotion that more than any other has gradually associated itself with twelve o'clock noon, as well as early in the morning, and towards evening is the *Angelus*. The noon *Angelus* is a memorial of the Passion as that in the morning is of the Resurrection and that in the evening of the Incarnation. The devotion is called the "Angelus" because that is the first word in the Latin, *Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae*, "The angel of

the Lord announced to Mary." Of course, any other prayers may be used and those which refer to our Lord's Death on the Cross are peculiarly appropriate, for example, the *Salvator Mundi*, which follows the *De Profundis* (Psalm 130) in the Visitation of the Sick (page 286 in The Prayer Book):

"O Saviour of the world, who by Thy Cross and Precious Blood hast redeemed us; Save us, and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord."

MEMORY OF THE PASSION

It is plainly the desire of the Church that we should "always remember the exceeding great love of our Master, and only Saviour, Jesus Christ . . . dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood shedding He hath obtained for us." It was to this end that the Holy Eucharist was instituted, then "Day by day, the memory of His Passion is renewed." But also by many

other means,—by the cross on the altar, on the church spire, on the walls of our houses, by the Friday abstinence marking the day on which He died; by the sign of the cross which we make many times a day, by pictures and hymns and emblems that recall the incidents of the Passion,—by all these and many other means the Church strives to keep fresh in our minds the mystery of Divine Love sacrificing itself for a guilty world to bring it healing and peace.

ACTED PRAYER

Before we pass from noon prayer to night prayers, it may be of service to point out a form of prayer somewhat more energetic than recollection and yet consistent with keen attention to external effort, especially manual effort and physical exertion. Let me explain.

There are many people now-a-days hurried along in the rush of social life or competitive industry, in whom there is

a painful sense of a duel between work and prayer. The two operations seem to them mentally exclusive, yet they are convinced that both are necessary. They must work; they must also pray. But how are they to proportion these expenditures of vital force, to adjust their mutual claims? When such people are working, often most unselfishly for others, they have a haunting feeling that they ought to be giving more time to prayer. Yet when they are at their prayers, the thought of the vast needs of the world presses upon them and they feel that they ought to be working.

In attempting to reconcile this contradiction, people try to accompany their work with mental prayers, to work and pray at the same time. But this proves to be distracting. Some forms of physical exercise, largely automatic,—walking at an even pace for example—readily admit of mental prayer, but most household tasks and almost all skilled labor

require fixed attention, the concentration of the mind on the movement of the hands, and to try to think a prayer at the same time causes distractions and confusion of thought. It is difficult to do two things thoroughly well at the same time. The Fathers of the Desert used to weave mats and meditate, but weaving mats probably required as little attention as knitting or folding circulars.

The solution may be found in what we will call "acted prayer." In this the act itself becomes a prayer, that is to say, the will that carries on the work is directed towards God just as the will that directs thoughts and frames sentences is in vocal prayer. No attempt is made to think of God or to address words to Him, but the will enters upon the work as *a means of uniting ourselves with God in doing, carefully and deftly, what will be pleasing to Him*. It will be seen that such a prayer as this, so far from interfering with one's work, makes the

very work a prayer. Something like this was probably in the mind of George Herbert when he wrote the well known lines:

“Teach me, my God and King,
 In all things Thee to see,
 And what I do in anything,
 To do it as for Thee.

* * * * *

“All may of Thee partake,
 Nothing can be so mean
 Which with his tincture (for Thy
 sake)
 Will not grow bright and clean.
 A servant with this clause
 Makes drudgery divine:
 Who sweeps a room, as for Thy cause,
 Makes that and the action fine.
 This is the famous stone
 That turneth all to gold:
 For that which God doth touch and
 own
 Cannot for less be told.”

PRAYERS AT NIGHT

The circumstances of people differ widely. Some persons will find the evening the occasion of greatest freedom for devotion, for others it is almost always a crowded time. But for all there are three forms of prayers that should find place at the close of the day, besides the commendation on lying down. The natural time for these would be just before retiring, but it is suggested that, if one is likely to be kept up late, the night prayers should be said immediately after the evening meal—when there is apt to be a breathing space,—leaving only the commendation to be made on going to bed.

The three forms of night prayers are Confession, Intercession, and Thanksgiving. A few words as to each of these must suffice.

CONFESSION

For this it will be necessary to give a

few minutes to self-examination as to the doings of the day just ended, seeking, with prayer for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to see where one has been guilty of failure and sin in thought, word, or deed, or in leaving something undone that should have been performed.

If one has a book for private prayer, it ought to contain at least half a dozen questions to ask oneself, questions that strike at one's predominant fault, and bring to mind one's special weaknesses and temptations. The questions should be specific, and framed so that one can without much delay answer "Yes" or "No." For example, "Did I lose my temper with Miss So-and-so to-day?" "Did I forget to say my prayers at noon?" "Did I give way to gossip at the meeting in the parish house?" "Was I square in what I said about securities at the meeting of directors?" The result of this self-examination should be noted down, and then there should be a definite con-

fession of one's sins to God, as clearly worded, though not necessarily spoken aloud, as though one were telling them to a fellow-creature.

We should make the Act of Contrition: "My God, I am sorry that I have offended Thee, who art so good,—forgive me for Jesus' sake, and I will try to sin no more."

INTERCESSION

This is a very large subject; it might well take up a whole volume by itself. What is apposite here is that each of us should have a list of persons and of objects for whom we pray every night, and others for which we pray once a week. *And this list should be changed from time to time*, some names dropped, and others written in. We should pray for "the holy Church throughout all the world," for the diocese and the Bishop, for the parish and the parish priest, for Missions and Missionaries, and for the vast needs of the world. Then there would be our

relatives and friends, living and departed, and those under our care.

THANKSGIVING

Thirdly, we should give thanks to God, for His loving-kindness and mercy, for God coming to be Man, for His saving the world by His Cross, for the Church in which the Holy Ghost brings us forgiveness of sins and unites us with God. And, then, for special blessings,—strength to serve, for patience to endure, the kindness of friends, the discipline of pain, deliverance in temptation, a loving smile from the face of a little child.

This matter of thanksgiving, again, is one that would repay extended treatment. It is one of the forms of prayer most often neglected, and with unhappy results of peevishness and self-pity. Just as prayer for others purges out the spirit that leads us to criticize and censure them, so thanksgiving drives away the ugly spirit of grumbling and complaint.

COMMENDATION

Lastly, as we lie down to rest, and sleep comes on, it should find us commending our souls to God, releasing the strain of life as we rest in the Everlasting Arms, our last thought of Him who has been with us all the day, with whom we hope to be throughout eternity:

“Into Thy hands I commend my spirit,
for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou
God of truth.”

CHAPTER IX.

WHY WE SHOULD PRAY

"Prayer can obtain everything; it can open the windows of heaven, and shut the gates of hell; it can put a holy constraint upon God, and detain an angel till he leave a blessing."—Jeremy Taylor.

REASONS FOR PRAYING

"It is as natural for a boy to pray as to play ball." Yes, if we had the hearts of children we should not find ourselves asking, "Why should I pray?" But to most of us, sooner or later, that question comes,—it may be because prayer seems needless, it may be because it has begun to seem fruitless.

Let us, then, set down some of the reasons why, according to the bidding of the Apostle, we should not cease to pray; why, as our Blessed Lord teaches, "men ought always to pray and not to faint."

At the beginning of this little treatise

we thought that it is by prayer we take and keep our place in the spiritual world, the world of living spirits who have their center in God. God made us for this very thing, that we might know and love Him, might be in fellowship with Him and with others in and through Him. God desires this, with a longing as much beyond our thought as He is greater than we are. He wants each one of us, personally, individually, to be in conscious, loving communion with Himself.

PRAYING BECAUSE GOD WANTS
TO HEAR US

Here, then, is our first answer to the question "Why should we pray?" We should pray because God loves us, and wants us to be in intimate relation with Him as His friends. "God's love and man's response—that is the meaning of our life as Christians. And it is God's love, the kindness of God our Saviour,

that comes first; we love Him because He first loved us."

It is really very awful to face the contrast. On the one hand that it does make a difference to God whether or not we speak to Him; yes, that the Heart of Jesus is hungry for a word from us. And, on the other hand, that we so lightly forget or omit our prayers, or "say" them so heedlessly that it must hurt our Lord almost more than if we had not gone through the half-empty form.

At any rate, here is the first constraining motive for prayer.

"Not for the sake of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward;
But as Thyself hast loved me
O ever-loving Lord."

PRAYING IN ORDER TO HELP GOD

Then, second, we should pray in order "to help God." The expression may sound rude or rash. It would be so, if

we meant by it that we are not dependent upon God, but can coöperate with Him on a level of equality, as one man may help another. But this is not what is meant. In His incomprehensible love for us, God has gone so far as to limit His own omnipotence by making each of us able to *choose* whether or not we will work along with Him. We can do nothing to help God except by the strength which He Himself supplies. But we can *will* that He should use us. And it is by prayer that we let God take our wills and work through them. The heart of all prayer is, "Thy Will be done." "We do not pray in order to change the Divine scheme, but to ask those things which God has decreed to be brought about by prayer."

When we are in anxiety over some dear, wilful child, it enheartens us to know that one whom we trust and revere is praying for him. We do not think that our friend loves the child more than

God does, or that our friend alone, apart from God, can bring a blessing to the child, but we are glad to feel that God's love for the child is in the heart of our friend, that our friend is a "worker together with God" on his behalf. So should we be fellow-laborers with God by prayer.

PRAYING IN ORDER TO HELP OTHERS

Then, third, we should pray in order to help others. This is, of course, really the same as our second reason for prayer. Only, in that we were thinking of prayer as the way in which our wills coöperate with God. Now we are thinking of how, in prayer, our wills grapple with other souls to draw them to Him. The Christian, in his intercession for his brother, holds up one hand to be clasped in the strong, nail-pierced Hand of Christ, and stretches his other hand out to grasp his brother, sinking, it may be, in the quicksand of temptation. And, in prayer, we

can pursue and overtake those who have baffled our every other attempt to reach them.

And, while prayer is our surest way of helping others, it is also the safest way, in that no true prayer can bring harm to another soul. "Say little about God to others, and much about others to God" is a wise rule (although there are times when we must speak to others of God if we would not be cowardly and cruel.) Yet, however carefully we choose the words we say to others, those words may be mistaken, and our most loving overtures may be misunderstood. But it is impossible for God to misunderstand us, or to let any thing we say to Him, however mistaken (provided only we are humble and sincere) lead to His inflicting injury upon those for whom we pray.

PRAYING TO WIN HELP FOR OURSELVES

Fourth, we should pray in order to win help for ourselves—forgiveness for

our frequent offences, strength to resist temptation, light in perplexity, grace to undertake some work to which God calls us. Our Lord gives very implicit instruction as this reason for prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." There is no niggardliness on the part of God. He would not have us "lack anything that is good." But, while all we have comes from Him, yet He makes the condition that we should pray for His gifts (in general or in particular), in order that we may look to Him as the Giver, and receive His gifts as tokens of His Fatherly love. So the farmer can not fashion the tiniest seed, can not make the sun shine or the rain fall or the south wind blow. He must look to God for all these His gifts. Yet the farmer must plow and sow and cultivate, or there will be no harvest when September comes.

PRAYING IN ORDER TO
BUILD UP THE FELLOWSHIP

Fifth, we must pray because thereby we unite ourselves with our brothers and sisters in the "blessed company of all faithful people," and so build up the fellowship everywhere. The Christian never prays alone. He is always a member of the Body of Christ, and he prays by the Holy Spirit who fills that Body and makes his prayer one with the great torrent of supplication ever pouring up to the Throne of God. Yet, also, there are some forms of prayer impossible to the Christian save in actual company with others. Above all there is the great Eucharistic Offering, wherein, day by day, Christ, by the Oblation of Himself, "makes His immense act of love for His own great ends and the vast needs of souls." The Altar is the focus of all the prayers which we offer in Christ, by His Holy Spirit. And every earnest pleading in prayer, alone or with others, draws us together in Him.

DATE-DUE ON DISCHARGE CARD



